

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT –

to The Members of the California Avocado Society in Annual Meeting at Fallbrook, California

October 19, 1968

In the year since we last met, at The Oaks, in Ojai, your Society has moved forward. The advancement has not been spectacular. Nor has it been as fast or as great as your Directors and Officers have wanted. In an organization of volunteers, such as ours, it seems difficult to achieve big goals, rapidly. Perhaps we should be contented that there has been progress — that we have at least achieved some small goals, and have moved nearer to our bigger goals. Perhaps we could move faster, however, with the active involvement of more members — and that involvement is solicited and will be welcome.

One year ago, you amended your by-laws to permit the enlargement of the Board to twelve members, three of whom could come from outside California. During the year, the California resident Directors, as you empowered them to do, did appoint three Directors at Large. They are Mr. Takashi Turu, a substantial grower of avocados and other fruits in the Veracruz area of Mexico — Mr. Enrique Costes, an important avocado grower in the Puebla area of Mexico — and Mr. John Gordon, a former California avocado grower and past President of this Society who is now pioneering in the agricultural development of Australia. These three men are valuable additions to your Board, and contribute to the influence of your Society throughout the world. And you do have a world-wide influence that constantly surprises me, and that I suspect few of you realize.

In another area of progress, we have sharpened up and strengthened the committee system of project development in the Society. The Board is now organized into nine permanent committees, with overlapping memberships, but with every California Director serving as the chairman of a committee. Each committee now has written objectives toward which to work, and a written statement of the functions within its purview. In time, if the system is nurtured, I believe this seed of organization will grow into more fruitful accomplishment than we have yet seen from this Society that has already accomplished so much. I say this with the conviction that the California Avocado Society has not yet really come even close to its full potential. There is so much yet to be done — so much yet that we *can* contribute to the advancement of the avocado industry — that I am personally impatient with the slow pace of our progress. Yet, I do recognize, as I hope you do — and do repeat, there has been progress.

A most significant development this past year was the establishment of an Avocado Nurserymen's Section of the California Avocado Society. This new Section, which will be regularly represented on your Board, has as its purpose to promote the advancement and improvement of avocado nursery stock in California. The Section will

operate autonomously in the area of its purpose, and has its own chairman and other officers with no responsibility for the general operation of the Society. Voting membership in the Section is limited to licensed avocado nurserymen, though other interested persons may become ex officio members. Through its representation on the Society's Board, there will be continuing inter-activity between the Nurserymen's Section and the main body of the Society. The Yearbook of the Society will become the publication, also, of the Nurserymen's Section — with increased benefit, not only to the nurserymen, but to all members of the Society.

The work of the Society this past year — or in most years, for that matter — does not lend itself well to summarization into a report that would be interesting to you. Suffice it to say, the bits and pieces that have occupied our attention at committee and Board meetings are part of the growth of this maturing avocado industry.

One activity that I do not want to touch upon briefly, because it was the prime project in the 1967-68 season, is the work of the Avocado Fruit Quality Improvement Committee, headed by William Catlin. The objective of the committee is "to foster research and practices that will lead to the consistent availability of avocados for purchase by the public that will be of a quality assuring consumer satisfaction and continuing demand". That's a mouthful, but it says a great deal to anyone who will take the time to savor and appreciate its implications. To achieve the objective, the committee is concerned with every factor that could conceivably affect avocado fruit quality — from the grove through the packinghouses and the retail stores to the ultimate consumers. Reflect on that, and you will appreciate the magnitude of this project.

One of the specific areas of attention from the committee this past year has been the picking of avocados. In cooperation with the California Department of Employment, our Quality Committee is engaged in the production of a training film for avocado pickers. This project is nearing completion, and the results should become tangible within the 1968-69 avocado season.

If there is a single word to describe the Society's area of greatness and effectiveness, I would choose the word "research". In the past dozen years, your Society has made research grants in excess of \$22,000. Most of the funds — though not all — have gone to the University of California. Most of the grants — though not all — have been in support of avocado root rot research. I can assure you that the contributions we have made to the University in support of research have been seed that have produced many more dollars from the University's own funds than would otherwise have been allotted to our small industry.

There must be *more* research. And the research now in progress must be accelerated. The California avocado industry is imperiled by the insidious avocado root rot disease, and time is running out. The Society, in the belief of your Board, is the desirable and logical vehicle through which the industry should channel its research demands and its funds in support of the demanded research. But the Society is neither strongly supported by numbers of members, nor is it wealthy in money. Improvement is called for in both departments. I shall dwell at this time only on the "money department".

Your Directors have concluded that an increase in dues is both appropriate and urgent. The Society is a bargain at the present rates; it will remain a bargain at the proposed new rates, even though the proposed increases look hefty in percentage terms.

You will have the opportunity at this meeting to consider amending your by-laws. Among the amendments to be considered is one that proposes to increase regular annual dues from \$6.00 to \$12.00, with appropriate increases, also, in the special membership classes. That is an increase of 100% — if you look at it one way. It is an increase of only 500 a month, if you look at it another way. However you look at it, I urge that you approve the proposal. It is by far the least expensive way you can go to step up research into the solutions to avocado root rot and other problems requiring professional research.

I want to mention now just a couple of other areas of the Society's activities — though more could be mentioned.

Your Society, for more than 50 years, has been concerned with the standardization of avocado quality in the market place. Your Directors have been concerned that the legal standard of minimum oil content of avocados in California has not been fully enforced in recent years because of a weakness in the sampling procedure that has allowed grossly immature fruit to be averaged with mature fruit to produce a "legal" average. Your Board joined growers and grower organizations in calling upon the California Department of Agriculture to establish a "floor" in the sample of avocados taken to determine the maturity of a "lot" of fruit. The joint effort was successful. The floor, at 7%, is below what we had sought; but it will have a favorable effect with regard to enforcement of the law. Perhaps later, efforts can be undertaken to improve the situation further.

A special activity I want to refer to is one that will not be of too much interest to most individual growers, perhaps, but it is nonetheless quite important to the technical people in the industry. This Society has previously published a comprehensive bibliography of the literature on the avocado and a supplement to that bibliography. We are now in the production stage of publication of a new supplementary bibliography covering the past ten years, assembled and edited by Dr. C. A. Schroeder, of U.C.L.A. This is a painstaking effort, and the industry is deeply in Dr. Schroeder's debt. The publication will become available before the end of 1968.

Finally, there is the Yearbook — the most tangible dividend from your investment of annual dues. If it were not for the labor of love given by the Publications Committee of your Board, headed by Director Frank Gilkerson this year, it would be impossible to publish the Yearbook at anything like its present cost and content. It is a shame, in my opinion, that this valuable publication is not more widely enjoyed. It is surprising and discouraging that so small a percentage of California avocado growers have enough interest in their own industry to become members and, as such, to acquire the Yearbook with its rich store of information from the most authoritative sources. What we seem to need is a membership campaign. But that brings us back to the problems of volunteer help. With the best of intentions, volunteers simply cannot devote the time to what needs to be done. The Society needs a paid secretary to keep it moving and growing. The job doesn't necessarily call for a full time secretary — at least, not yet. It can use to great advantage, however, a person of retired or semi-retired status who has the time to

keep the organization in good order, the Directors on their toes, and the avocado world informed about the Society. It is partly to assure that there will be money to compensate such a paid Secretary, when one is found, that your Board is recommending a dues increase.

Now, let's wrap this report up.

I have been privileged to serve as your president this past year. The job has been rewarding because of the fine men surrounding me on your Board. Two of these men, to your great loss and mine, are retiring from the Board this year. One is Chaffee C. Young, who joined your Board in 1948 and has served since. The other is Theodore J. Todd, who became a Director in 1959 — and has served since. Both have served as President of the Society. Both have been more than generous in their contributions to the industry's advancement. These are rare men, too little appreciated, and they will be missed. I am grateful to them for the help they have both given me. I am likewise grateful to the rest of the Directors — and to our two co-secretaries, G. L. Baldwin and H. T. Walker — and to you, the members.

Ladies and gentlemen, there's work to do next year. A lot of it. You will have a Board representing you that will give service far beyond the call of duty — and that will need your help. You will have new officers, who will likewise need your help. We have seen progress, as I have said earlier; it is my personal belief that what you have seen so far is just the bare beginning. What will happen from here on can be tremendous, if that is really what you want. I hope it is. I have a dream for this industry, and I want to see it come true. You would enjoy my dream, so step into it — and let's make it come true together. Now, on to 1969!

—*J. S. Shepherd* President